Wiota Reporter

WEATHER REPORT

Today's average is forecasted to be 84°F, a little warmer than yesterday. Clear skies expected today, with overcast around 3 pm.

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CRATERS LEFT IN LAFAYETTE

by Emma Chamms

A late-night boom shook the quiet countryside of Lafayette County yesterday as an unidentified object crashed just outside the abandoned township of Gratiot's Grove, startling livestock and launching local tongues into high gear. The incident occurred at approximately 2:37 a.m., according to local farmer Edward Kamis, 64, whose property lies less than a half-mile from the impact site.

"I was up tending to Maybelle," Kamis explained, referring to his elderly Jersey cow recovering from a stomach twist. "All of a sudden, the sky lit up like the Fourth of July, and then—BANG—the whole house rattled like a freight train came off the rails. My dog, Rusty, ran under the porch and he hasn't come out since."

Kamis, a lifelong resident of the area, said he initially thought the boom was a thunderclap, but the skies were clear. The glow, he said, "hung in the air" for several minutes. "It was like someone left a porch light on in the sky."

By sunrise, a few brave neighbors ventured toward the site near the now-forgotten Gratiot's Grove mining area. What they found is currently the subject of wild speculation.

"It looked like some sort of wreckage," said Roger Welty, a retired mechanic who drove his Ford pickup to the site just before dawn. "Big, metal chunks. Nothing like a crop duster or weather balloon I've ever seen. Almost looked like something off one of them NASA shuttles on the news."

Local sheriff's deputies arrived mid-morning and cordoned off the area. A spokesperson for the Lafayette County Sheriff's Office described the crash site as containing "twisted metallic debris" but declined to offer further comment. Rumors of federal involvement have begun to circulate, though unconfirmed.

The National Weather Service office in Madison reported no meteor activity last night, and when reached for comment, a representative for the Wisconsin Air National Guard stated they had "no scheduled aircraft activity" in the area at the time of the crash.

This has done little to calm the curiosity—and imaginations—of Wiota locals.

"I think it was a Soviet satellite," speculated Duane Martin, who operates the Sinclair gas station off County Road N. "Or maybe one of those new stealth bombers."

Others, like Kamis, are more philosophical.

"Whatever it was, it didn't come from around here. Never seen anything like it in 40 years of farming. Maybe it's just space junk."

Local authorities have asked residents to avoid the crash site until further notice and report any "unusual items or behavior" to officials.

NORMAN PETTY DIES

LUBBOCK, Texas -- Rock 'n' roll star Buddy Holly's manager and producer, Norman Petty of Clovis, N.M., died Wednesday in Methodist Hospital of a lengthy illness. He was 57.

Petty became associated with Holly in 1956 when Holly cut some demonstration tapes at Petty's Clovis recording studio.

The producer died in Holly's hometown, which annually celebrates the Sept. 7 birthday of its native star, who would have been 48 this year.

Holly and other rock 'n' roll stars Richie Valens and J.P. 'The Big Bopper' Richardson died in a Feb. 3, 1959, plane crash near the Mason City, Iowa, airport as they left after a concert.

Known as a rock 'n' roll producer in the 1950s and 1960s, Petty also handled hit records for Buddy Knox, Jimmy Bowen, Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs, Waylon Jennings and Trini Lopez.

'I have tried to become an astute observer of seeing what an artist does well and then polishing it,' Petty once said. 'Being a good listener and transferring what I hear onto tape.'

Relatives said Petty had remained active as a producer and music publisher in recent years.

Survivors include Petty's wife, Violet Ann; his mother, Mrs. S.S. Petty of Clovis; and two sisters, Shirley Kornegay of Carlsbad, N.M., and Edith Massey of Clovis. Funeral services are pending in Clovis.

PREVIEW